

PROGRAM 3

Production Company

Vitagraph Company of America

Transfer Note

Copied at 16 frames per second from a 35mm print preserved by the George Eastman House.

Running Time

5 minutes

The outrageous freedom of early film is one of its greatest pleasures. The first narrative movies are not so much uncensored as untamed, not yet held captive by decorum. This is the side of "primitive" cinema admired by French surrealists, who saw in it a means of unlocking the irrational and unconscious. But surrealists seldom had opportunity to see films quite like *The Thieving Hand*.

Filmed in Brooklyn by a now unknown director and released in January 1908, *The Thieving Hand* was a product of the Vitagraph Company, whose founders pioneered special effects films in America, as with 1909's *Princess Nicotine* (in Program One). The tricks in *The Thieving Hand*—stop-motion substitutions and movement by hidden wires—are simple but flawlessly executed.

The dreamlike story follows a destitute, one-armed street peddler. His honesty in returning a ring dropped by a philanthropist is rewarded when the man escorts him to a "Limb" store to buy a new arm. Unfortunately, the arm takes instructions only from the id (reminding us now of "Dr. Strangelove's" irrepresible arm). Because the final frames of the film's last shot are missing in the sole known surviving copy—preserved by the George Eastman House and reproduced here—the moral circle is incomplete: In the prison cell, the arm crawls back to its original owner, a one-armed thief in convict's stripes, and the poor pencil vendor is set free from both the prison and the tyrant arm.



The Thieving Hand faced criticism for, of all things, its social inaccuracies—a mark of how rapidly realist logic was supplanting irrational verve. “The closing scene spoils an otherwise perfect reproduction,” reported *Moving Picture World*; “No suspect is placed among convicts until he has had a trial.”—SS

About the Music

Most of the music for this film is from the world of ragtime. The principal piece is a comic song that appeared the same year, “The Yama-Yama Man” (Davis, Hoschna, 1908). The opening verse explains the nonsensical title as a name for a scary figure (like the bogeyman); subsequent verses poke fun at New York life, from the theater to streetcar fares. In other words, the song conjures up things weird and “out of joint,” and its somewhat sinister moments are just right for *The Thieving Hand*’s grotesqueries. For the rest, inspired by the film’s title, I used strains from “That Hand-Played Rag” (Silverman & Ward, 1914), as well as a segment from “Sponge” (1911)—one of the only ragtime pieces I know of that has a strong “Yiddish” inflection, making it an apt choice for the pawnbroker’s scenes. “Sponge” is by Walter C. Simon, who also composed the early published score for *The Confederate Ironclad* (see Program One). Finally, I couldn’t resist thieving the main tune from the song “I’ve Got Rings on My Fingers” (Weston & Barnes, Scott, 1909) at an obvious moment.

One year after *The Thieving Hand* was released, some early critics of film music began to take nickelodeon pianists to task for playing such repertoire (rags, silly popular songs) far too much, for all sorts of films, often with ludicrous results. But such music is surely apt for *this* film, which has not a solemn bone in its body.—MM

WHITE FAWN'S DEVOTION (1910)

Production Company

Pathé Frères

Director / Writer

James Young Deer (?)

Transfer Note

Copied at 19 frames per second from a 35mm print preserved by the Library of Congress (AFI/New Zealand Film Archive Collection).

Running Time

11 minutes



White Fawn's Devotion is probably the earliest surviving film directed by a Native American. Released in June 1910, it is also among the first films made in America by France's Pathé Frères, then the world's largest film production company.

U.S. motion picture trade journals, in a battle both cultural and economic, had ridiculed the English saddles and gingham-shirted Indians in Pathé's European-made Westerns. Pathé's answer was to open a studio in New Jersey and hire as director of its Westerns a Native American, James Young Deer. After Pathé opened a Los Angeles branch, Young Deer would be promoted to its general manager.

Born in Nebraska of Winnebago ancestry, James Young Deer had tramped the country with *Wild West* shows and circuses before landing roles in film Westerns, sometimes alongside his wife, Lillian St. Cyr (likewise a Winnebago, with a long career under the stage name “Princess Redwing”). For Kalem, Lubin, and other early companies Young Deer also penned Western scenarios. In part because he was never given credit on-screen for any of the approximately 120 films he directed for Pathé between 1910 and 1913, James Young Deer has become a completely forgotten figure, and his films are impossible to attribute with certainty. Only four are thought to survive in U.S. archives.

White Fawn's Devotion, like almost all American Westerns

before it, was shot in the East. As with several other Young Deer films (to judge from their plot descriptions), it draws from the popular 1905 stage melodrama *The Squaw Man*—about a Briton whose Indian wife sacrifices herself by suicide—but alters the outcome significantly. In *White Fawn's Devotion* a Briton named Combs, his Indian wife, White Fawn, and their daughter live in a Dakota log cabin. When Combs makes plans to claim “an unexpected legacy,” White Fawn fears he is leaving forever with their child and attempts suicide. The daughter, finding her father bent over her mother holding a bloody knife, mistakenly reports murder to her Indian grandfather. After the chase by the tribe, Combs is set for execution at the hands of his reluctant daughter, until White Fawn—who has only wounded herself—arrives to set things right.

For all its simple pantomime style, *White Fawn's Devotion* arrives at a conclusion almost unknown in the era's film or fiction: The interracial couple live happily ever after. The surviving print, preserved by the Library of Congress, is missing a few feet at its end, and Pathé's publicity fills in the resolution: “The Combs take their departure and return to their home, for he feels he will be happier with his family on the plains than if he goes east and claims his legacy.” It was only when Young Deer reversed the sexes of the interracial couple that reviewers were outraged. About (the unfortunately lost) *Red Deer's Devotion*, which Young Deer shot in the West in 1911, *Moving Picture World* said: “Another feature of this film will not please a good many. It represents a white girl and an Indian falling in love with each other. While such a thing is possible, and undoubtedly has been done many times, there is still a feeling of disgust which cannot be overcome when this sort of thing is depicted as plainly as it is here.”

Between 1908 and 1912, Native American images were seen more widely on movie screens than ever again. In 1913 *Moving Picture World* reported that “Indian dramas . . . are played out” and that film companies were hanging “No Indians Wanted”

signs. That is also the year that James Young Deer—who surfaced briefly in the British and French film industries—essentially vanished from the American movie business.—SS

About the Music

Nearly every collection of silent-movie music published in America (and many published abroad) contained pieces designated as “Indian Music.” Their number is tremendous, yet almost all share a few stereotypical features, which most of us still recognize. For more than a hundred years—from nineteenth-century Wild West shows and stageplays to many a Western feature or TV series—they have been drummed into our ears, and only in recent decades has their hold begun to weaken.

Probably no one would wish for an out-and-out revival of such music, but it is important to know how it once did flourish, in large part owing to the above-mentioned popularity of films such as *White Fawn's Devotion*. That is why my score is based entirely on (pseudo-)“Indian” pieces, most of them published within a few years of the film. Some are lyric, like the “Indian Love Song” by J.S. Zamecnik, taken from the second volume of his seminal series *Sam Fox Moving Picture Music* (1913), and the “Omaha Love Song (traditional),” from the *Remick Folio of Moving Picture Music* (1914). Some are noisy action pieces, like the “Indian Agitato” by Otto Langey (1918, recommended for “Indian emotional scenes, rivalry, jealousy, expectancy, apprehension, etc.”). Because these pieces have much in common, they are easily interwoven, making the score sound like a fantasia upon a very few “Indian” themes.—MM

About the Preservation

A nitrate print of *White Fawn's Devotion* was located in the New Zealand Film Archive and repatriated through the American Film Institute to the Library of Congress.

THE CHECHAHCOS (1924)

<i>Production Company</i>	Alaska Moving Picture Corp.
<i>Producer</i>	Capt. Austin E. Lathrop
<i>Director / Writer</i>	Lewis S. Moomaw
<i>Title Text</i>	Harvey Gates
<i>Title Art</i>	Sydney Laurence
<i>Photographers</i>	Herbert H. Brownell and Raymond Johnson
<i>Cast</i>	William Dills ("Horseshoe" Riley), Albert Van Antwerp (Bob Dexter), Eva Gordon (Mrs. [Margaret] Stanlaw), Alexis B. Luce (Richard Steele), Gladys Johnson (Ruth Stanlaw), Baby Margie (Ruth as a child), and Guernsey Hays (Pierre)
<i>Transfer Note</i>	Copied at 22 frames per second from a 35mm print preserved by the Alaska Film Archives; 8 reels.
<i>Running Time</i>	86 minutes

By the start of the 1920s, filmmaking and distribution were largely controlled by a handful of Hollywood studios. Ever since then, it has taken "independent" films to break the production routine. *The Chechahcos* is about as independent as features come.



This first feature filmed entirely on location in Alaska was the brainchild of Austin E. Lathrop. In voyages like the one imagined in the film's opening, "Cap" Lathrop had skippered gold seekers northward during the Klondike rush of the late 1890s. His empire eventually included a string of movie theaters, radio stations, newspapers, a cannery, and Alaska's largest coal mine (in which he was killed in a 1950 accident). Lathrop and his Alaska Moving Picture Corporation produced just this single film, which was not a commercial success. *The Chechahcos* (pronounced chee-chaw-koz) transliterates an Inuit word for "tenderfoot" or "newcomer" to the north, and

is a title that would have been instantly vetoed by Hollywood marketers. As *Variety* commented about the title, "Its value commercially is still open to discussion in view of its difficult pronunciation."

At its release in May 1924, the film was preceded by a (now presumably lost) short showing President Harding, who died the previous August, meeting the crew during his last cross-continent trip. None of the cast or crew had much moviemaking experience. Director-writer Lewis Moomaw worked for a tiny Portland, Oregon, production company called American Lifeograph; he had shot exteriors on one of his two previous features, *The Golden Trail* (1920), in Alaska. With the exception of Eva Gordon (who plays Margaret Stanlaw), the leads were apparently drawn from actors residing in Alaska. Albert Van Antwerp (who plays the younger of the two seasoned prospectors) and Alexis B. Luce (the knife-tossing villain) appeared only in this one silent film, although Luce had long stage experience. William Dills ("Horseshoe" Riley, the bearded sourdough) had debuted in *The Golden Trail* and would end his career with another (lost) Alaskan feature, *North of Nome* (1925).

Gladys Johnson too returned to the screen only for *North of Nome*, despite the build-up given her by *Variety* at *The Chechahcos*' New York opening: "Gladys Johnson, personating Ruth Stanlaw grown up, suggested brilliant possibilities as a screen personality. Her girlish charm typifies the adolescent period outwardly better than Marguerite Clark ever did, or anybody today." (Marguerite Clark—the star of *Snow White* in Program Four—had retired from films in 1921.) *Variety* also thought that all the "snow and ice stuff" would be just the ticket for the coming New York summer. The film's release corresponds with the start of Charlie Chaplin's production on his epic Alaskan comedy *The Gold Rush* (1925), which may have been influenced by the striking staging here, especially of the line of prospectors trudging over Chilcoot Pass.

The Chechabcos begins with snowswept landscape ("A White Dominion—lonely—unfathomable," reads the first intertitle), and the land remains the film's central force. The evocative art titles are primarily by the luminist painter Sydney Laurence (1865–1940), born in New York and trained in Paris, who came to Alaska in 1903. (Art titles are intertitles with painted backgrounds that became popular in the 1920s; *Hell's Hinges* [1916], in Program One, includes some of the very first examples.) Laurence won renown for his landscapes—especially of Alaska's Mount McKinley, a version of which hangs in the White House in Washington—but was weaker with human subjects. Something of the same could be said about *The Chechabcos* as a whole. Its use of the land is breathtaking, while its tale of a lost child, a mother's love, and an oily villain is "like a Bowery melodrama" (in the *New York Times*' words) "and includes all the old hoke" (in *Variety*'s). Still, there is something elemental about the story that suits the land.

What also remains so extraordinary about *The Chechabcos* is how polished it looks for a production completely removed from Hollywood. Its authentic locations and action set-pieces—the ship explosion, the dogsled chases, the pursuit across the glacier—were bettered nowhere. Completely forgotten outside of Alaska, *The Chechabcos* is one of the most impressive examples of regional American filmmaking.—SS

About the Music

For *The Chechabcos* I set out to create an exciting compilation score, much as I did for *Hell's Hinges*, its Western kin. But this "Northern" does not call for cowboy songs; what it wants is music tied to the period of the Alaskan gold rush (the story takes place from around 1897 to 1910) and its pioneer settlements no less than to the film's many rugged, wintry locations. The period and the settlements can be suggested through a rich heritage of music, much of which is now available in a splendid anthology, *Music of the Alaska-Klondike Gold Rush: Songs and History*, compiled and annotated by Jean A. Murray (1999,

Univ. of Alaska Press). This source proved most helpful for ideas about appropriate songs, dances, and other pieces, especially for the early scenes onboard ship and for those in the Mason "Dance Hall," where Margaret Stanlaw sings and others drink, dance, and dally. It was gratifying to be able to play the beautiful nostalgic favorite "Home! Sweet Home!" (Payne, Bishop, n.d.), which she sings on ship: The complete song plays perfectly to the filmed performance and quoted words on-screen. Two famous waltz songs seemed especially appropriate for a woman in her position: "After the Ball" (Harris, 1892) and "She Is More to Be Pitied Than Censured" (Gray, 1898). (At least half of the ballads of the "gay" nineties seem to be about pitiable and "fallen" women!)

For the film's sublime vistas, what I found to be the "right" music came from much farther afield, in Erik Satie's four *Ogives* for piano (1886). These astonishing miniatures—at once simple, majestic, spiritual, and impassive—were inspired by Satie's fascination with medieval mysticism and Gregorian chant. The French title refers to the pointed arches and ribbed vaults of Gothic cathedrals, to which (as I see it) the Alaskan mountains and glaciers have a strange affinity.

The score's overall structure is complex, and the repertoire is wide-ranging (with many comic pieces, *agitatos*, *furiosos*, etc.), because *The Chechabcos* is the longest feature in this anthology and has more varied pacing and scenes than the others. The action moves quickly at the beginning, slows considerably during the middle reels, and then races on dogsleds, mountain snowbanks, and glaciers to its climax. The most interesting characters are "Horseshoe" Riley, who conveys a gruff, "snow-wise" comic exterior but also a darker side in his intense dislike of adult women, and Ruth Stanlaw, the character who "grows" (physically as well as emotionally). It is her reunion with her mother, rather than with Bob Dexter, that brings the film to its emotional climax and end. These are some shining facets of the film that I have tried to "mine" and mirror with music.—MM

About the Preservation *The Chechahcos* was long thought to survive only in a 16mm reduction print. Publicity about the Alaska Film Archives' planned preservation of the film through *Treasures of American Film Archives* led to the discovery of a 35mm print. This 1999 preservation in 35mm by the Alaska Film Archives is the version seen here.

From JAPANESE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES (1927–32)

Filmmaker

Rev. Sensho Sasaki

Transfer Note

Five sequences copied at 18 frames per second from two 16mm prints preserved by the Japanese American National Museum.

Running Time

7 minutes

For a window into the daily life of ethnic Americans before World War II, no source surpasses amateur filmmaking. Like the rural towns seen elsewhere in this anthology, ethnic communities held little interest for mainstream filmmakers.

Rev. Sensho Sasaki (1903–72), a twenty-fifth-generation

Buddhist priest, took these movies of his family and others in West Coast Japanese American communities. (He can be glimpsed briefly in these excerpts, lighting a cigarette.) Rev. Sasaki took up amateur moviemaking soon after 16mm safety film was introduced in 1923. The shots of giggling girls dancing a sidewalk Charleston and the baseball players were

taken around 1927 in the California Central Valley city of Stockton. Later Rev. Sasaki moved to Washington state and the Tacoma Hongwanji Buddhist Church, around which most of the subsequent sequences were taken in 1932—as dated by his homemade intertitle—during the “NWYP’s [probably North



West Young People’s] Third Annual Buddhist Federation Convention.”

These are ordinary enough home movies. But history has a way of adding value to the simple artifacts of the past. In hindsight, it’s impossible to look back at Rev. Sasaki’s films of Japanese American life without seeing them as rare documents of communities soon to be uprooted by forced incarceration in the American domestic detention camps of World War II.—SS

About the Music

No one can know what Rev. Sasaki would have wanted for musical accompaniment to his footage—nor if he even wanted any music at all. Of course, such uncertainty pertains equally to many of the other examples of amateur filmmaking in this anthology, but here it is compounded by the subject matter. Assuming (as I do) that this film ought to be enhanced by music, one must then decide upon its character, whether mainly “Japanese,” mainly “American,” or some mixture of the two. This score is basically American in style, taking its cue both from the West Coast settings and from the activities depicted. The children dancing the Charleston and the baseball game prompted me to play some familiar American songs and the “National Emblem March” by E.E. Bagley. Still, I sought Japanese inflections by incorporating pieces from the silent period that were intended for travelogues, “exotic” stories, and the like.

I also sought a rather wistful overall tone, for reasons indicated at the end of the commentary above. I was drawn to use an appropriately lyrical, melancholy segment from a piece called “Fuji-Ko (Japanese Intermezzo)” by H.R. Shelley. It can be heard more than once, notably for the film’s final shots and poignant “Sayonara.” The latter bespeaks a confidence that was sadly contradicted by future events.—MM

About the Preservation Home movies by Rev. Sasaki and other Japanese Americans were preserved in 1999–2000 by the Japanese American National Museum through *Treasures of American Film Archives* funding.

Further Viewing Additional footage from Rev. Sasaki is included in *Moving Memories* (1993), a video production of the Japanese American prewar community featuring home movies archived at the Japanese American National Museum, produced by Karen Ishizuka and created by Robert Nakamura. Their *Something Strong Within* (1994) documents America's World War II domestic detention camps through amateur footage taken primarily by Japanese Americans. Ordering information for both VHS tapes is online at the JANM web site: www.lausd.k12.ca.us/janm.

From Rare Aviation Films

THE KEYSTONE "PATRICIAN" (1928)

Production Company Keystone Aircraft Corp.
Transfer Note Two sequences copied at 19 frames per second from a 16mm print preserved by the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.
Running Time 6 minutes

THE ZEPPELIN "HINDENBURG" (1936)

Transfer Note Two sequences copied at 19 frames per second from a 16mm color and black-and-white print preserved by the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.
Running Time 7 minutes



Among the ways that aviation history is documented by the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum is through the film types sampled here: industrial promotions and home movies. These particular selections each preserve moving images of a notable aircraft during its very brief commercial life.

The Keystone Aircraft Corporation made the first film in 1928 to promote its new *Patrician*, a huge plane for the day, with an eighty-eight-foot wingspan, a fifteen-thousand-pound take-off weight, and seats for twenty passengers. Although passenger air service in Europe began in the early 1920s, few regularly scheduled flights were made in the United States. Charles Lindbergh had ignited imaginations with his solo transatlantic flight in 1927. The challenge for commercial manufacturers was to convince the public that flying was safe, convenient, and sexy.

The Keystone film begins with twenty men boarding the *Patrician* (which held fifteen in the main cabin and five in a forward cabin with "sleeping berths") and disembarking as "pleased passengers." The second sequence excerpted here—which may be from a second film by the company—shifts to

Los Angeles, where things were evidently put into the hands of a cannier promoter ready to spice things up with the thirty-three "California beauties" whose legs compete for attention with the trimotor propellers. The light collective weight of the "beauties" presumably helps break the passenger-capacity and altitude-speed records proclaimed in the intertitles (at a time when aviation records—and prizes for breaking them—were widely announced). Alas, for all its technical superiority, Keystone had the bad timing to introduce its *Patrician* just before the Depression. Smaller, less expensive planes from Boeing, Douglas, and others would instead prove key to commercial aviation in America.



The 1936 home movie of the German dirigible *Hindenburg* was taken by a vacationing American family. The now unidentified group must have been among the only five hundred passengers who made the ten trips from Frankfurt to New Jersey during the *Hindenburg's* single year of operation. At 804 feet long, it was the largest rigid lighter-than-air craft ever constructed and could reach

eighty-four miles per hour with the four diesel-driven propellers seen in the footage. Captured by the amateur filmmakers are the elegant dining room, observation salon, and control gondola. As was a practice in early home movies, the family edited in intertitles (commercially produced from text supplied by filmmakers). Less common in the thirties is the brief color footage also edited in.

The *Hindenburg's* spectacular demise at its first 1937 landing, in which thirty-six passengers and crew were killed, occurred at the Lakehurst Naval Air Station, seen here the previous year. Although it was speculated in Germany that the *Hindenburg* fell victim to an anti-Nazi plot, the likely cause was static electricity discharge in conjunction with flammable

hydrogen gas leaking from the tanks that kept the *Hindenburg* aloft. After the disaster its sister ship the *Graf Zeppelin* was decommissioned, and so these home movies preserve the last days of commercial travel by dirigible.—SS

About the Music

The Keystone "Patrician." At least since the success of the circus ballad "[The Man on] The Flying Trapeze" (1868), musicians and audiences have associated elegant tunes in waltz time with the sensation of being airborne. Once airplanes were invented, many such songs were composed, including "Come, Take a Trip in My Air-Ship" (Evans, Shield, 1904). I used the latter "air" to set a suitably lighthearted mood, but for the actual flight scenes the quick pacing led me to choose a glittering lively march called "Attack of the Uhlans," by Carl Bohm. For those scenes of the "chorus-line" of "beauties," I decided to follow a traditional newsreel approach by playing some enduring songs of the period.

The Zeppelin "Hindenburg." For the *Hindenburg's* journey over the Atlantic, the music is drawn from one of Emil Waldteufel's most appealing waltzes, "Les Sirènes" (1878)—a match to these scenes of leisurely, buoyant travel. As a counterbalance, for the scenes of send-off and arrival, lively songs and marches were used, most notably "The Gladiators' Farewell" (1906), by Hermann Ludwig Blankenburg. Its grandiose second strain seemed to work well both for the majesty of the zeppelin and for the darker implications of this film, which today are inescapable, and problematic, for any musician.—MM

About the Preservation

Both films were preserved in 1999 through *Treasures of American Film Archives* funding.

WE WORK AGAIN (1937)

Production Company

U.S. Works Progress Administration

Transfer Note

Copied from a 35mm positive preprint preserved by the National Archives and Records Administration.

Running Time

15 minutes



Priceless historical footage can be “lost” within unlikely films. *We Work Again*, a Depression-era documentary on African American reemployment, also includes a forgotten record of the first professional play staged by Orson Welles.

It had long been assumed that no sound or moving images survived from Welles’s legendary “Voodoo *Macbeth*,” his 1936 Harlem stage production of

Shakespeare’s play, set in Haiti with an African American cast. As one of Welles’s many biographers lamented in 1996, “Nothing remains but still photographs and memories.” However, *We Work Again* turns out to include the production’s final four minutes.

Made for the U.S. government by Pathé News in 1937, *We Work Again* promotes the job-training accomplishments of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for African Americans, primarily in New York City. (A companion film, *Work Pays America* [1937], surveyed the WPA’s national programs.) Created in 1935 as President Roosevelt’s primary New Deal jobs program, the WPA found work for more than eight million people in its eight-year existence. Unemployment in Harlem in 1935 was above 80 percent, and riots against white-owned businesses broke out that year under the slogan “Don’t Shop Where You Can’t Work.” *We Work Again* visually touches on such despair before surveying the new WPA programs for skilled workers, laborers, child welfare, and adult literacy. The

presumption in the film of limited employment options for African Americans probably reflects the era more than the WPA itself, which broke ground in federal financing of African American artists. Among those seen participating in the WPA’s Federal Music Project is a group led by Juanita Hall (1901–68), subsequently known for her roles in the Broadway and film versions of *South Pacific*.

Orson Welles was twenty years old when he directed the *Macbeth* seen here. The offer came from his early mentor John Houseman, who had been appointed head of the Negro Theatre Unit of the WPA’s Federal Theatre Project. (The \$23.86 per week salary was not an inducement. Welles’s radio voice already earned him a thousand dollars a week, much of which he spent on the production.) After mounting two newly commissioned plays by African Americans, the Negro Theatre Unit was looking to produce a “classical” play with a black cast. Welles’s concept—which he credited to his wife Virginia—was to move *Macbeth* from medieval Scotland to nineteenth-century Haiti and the court of Henri Christophe (1767?–1820), the former slave who proclaimed himself “King Henry I.” Key to the transposition, as Welles put it at the time, was that “the witch element in the play falls beautifully into the supernatural atmosphere of Haitian voodoo.” If few of the available black actors had experience with blank verse, that was all the better to Welles, who, throughout his career, made Shakespeare less highbrow, often by way of massive textual changes. After a long four-month rehearsal, *Macbeth* opened at the Lafayette Theater (7th Ave. at 133rd St.) on April 14, 1936.

Captured on film are the production’s final minutes: the arrival of the conquering army disguised as “Birnam Wood,” Macbeth’s death at the hands of Macduff, and “th’ usurper’s cursèd head” mounted “upon a pole.” The narrator of *We Work Again* could not be more wrong in telling us that “every line in the play has remained intact.” For those who know Shakespeare’s text well, the concluding moment is jolting.

Welles brings back a character often cut altogether, the witch queen Hecate, transforms her into a man (played by Eric Burroughs), and gives him a final line—taken from the first act—reaffirming the witches' power: "The charm's wound up!" Welles's version thus ends not with the reestablishment of political order but with the return of repressed instincts. Macbeth is played by six-foot-four-inch Jack Carter, who had experience on Broadway in *Porgy* . . . and experience in jail for murder. "The end, which is always somewhat confused," Jean Cocteau commented after seeing the production, is transformed "into a superb ballet of ruin and death."

Some mainstream reviewers carped about Welles's alterations of Shakespeare, or chided the black voices for lacking "poetry." However, even Brooks Atkinson in the *New York Times* conceded that "as an experiment in Afro-American showmanship the *Macbeth* merited the excitement that rocked the Lafayette last night. If it is witches you want, Harlem knows how to overwhelm you with their fury and phantom splendor." Black reviewers saw something more, an African American—cast play that was neither stereotypical "folklore" nor a slick musical: Roi Ottley in Harlem's *Amsterdam News* wrote, "In *Macbeth* the negro has been given an opportunity to discard the bandana and burnt-cork casting to play a universal character." The play sold out its sixty-four-performance Harlem run (during which Welles reached voting age), with seats given away for each Monday's performance on presentation of relief cards. Maurice Ellis, seen here as Macduff, took over the title role when the production went on national tour—overcoming the challenges facing a 110-member African American company moving through segregated cities.—SS

Further Reading

The fullest account of the production is in Simon Callow's *Orson Welles: The Road to Xanadu* (1995, Viking Press).

From LA VALSE (1951)

Filmmaker

Carol Lynn

Choreographer

George Balanchine

Dancers

Tanaquil Le Clercq and Nicholas Magallanes

Transfer Note

Copied at about 18 frames per second from a 16mm print preserved by the New York Public Library.

Running Time

6 minutes



Dance is the most fleeting of art forms. This amateur footage from a half century ago preserves moments of George Balanchine's choreography as performed by the dancers for whom he created it.

Filmed were two excerpts from Balanchine's 1951 ballet *La Valse* (*The Waltz*), choreographed to Maurice Ravel's *Valses, nobles et sentimentales* (1911). The waltz, popular since the eighteenth century, often inspired ballet choreographers

to evoke lost eras. The critic Anatole Chujoy described *La Valse* as "neo-romantic, permeated with the spirit of the romantic period of the 30s of the past century."

George Balanchine (1904–83) is acknowledged as the twentieth century's greatest ballet choreographer. Born in Czarist Russia, he came to America in 1933 and with Lincoln Kirstein founded in 1948 the New York City Ballet, where *La Valse* premiered on February 20, 1951. During his fifty-year career, Balanchine choreographed more than four hundred works, including many dances for theater and film. His demanding choreography required superbly trained dancers. The two seen in these pas de deux from *La Valse* both trained under his supervision at the School of American Ballet. Tanaquil Le Clercq became one of the New York City Ballet's most renowned principal dancers, performing key roles for Balanchine, to whom

she was married from 1952 to 1969. Her career was cut short by polio in 1956. Nicholas Magallanes, a native of Mexico, danced primarily for the New York City Ballet from the late 1940s until his retirement in 1973.

This 16mm film was taken during a 1951 performance at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, the oldest continuing U.S. dance festival, located in the Berkshire hills of western Massachusetts. The photographer, Carol Lynn, was a dancer, choreographer, and administrative director of the Jacob's Pillow School from 1936 to 1960. Her films, now at the New York Public Library, include more than 150 performances at Jacob's Pillow.—SS

About the Music

In 1994, the NYPL's Dance Division, in conjunction with the George Balanchine Trust, began a project to add piano accompaniment to selected silent dance films. Dancers specializing in Balanchine choreography worked with sound technicians to synchronize the dance and music. Playing the Ravel score for these excerpts from *La Valse* is pianist Dianne Chilgren, who studied at the Eastman School of Music and Indiana University and was a longtime accompanist for New York City Ballet rehearsals and class sessions.—SS

THE WALL (1962)

U.S. Information Agency

Walter de Hoog

Alexander Scourby

Vincent Apollo and Robert Brown

Copied from a 35mm positive preprint preserved by the National Archives and Records Administration.

10 minutes

This taut 1962 documentary about the first year of the Berlin Wall is as little known to Americans as are almost all of the films

produced by the United States Information Agency. The USIA, created at the start of the Eisenhower administration in 1953, was charged with disseminating ideas about America and the "Free World" to audiences abroad. In addition to its "Voice of America" radio network and foreign-language magazines, the USIA produced films that by law could not be screened publicly within the United States. This restriction, intended to prevent the federal government from propagandizing its own citizens, also meant that Americans could not view the films at all, even for study at the National Archives. With the end of the Cold War, the law was changed in 1990 to allow domestic release of

USIA films twelve years after their distribution overseas.

If the Cold War was partly a battle of ideas, no symbol was more potent than the Berlin Wall. It was as if Churchill's 1946 metaphor of an "iron curtain" dividing Europe finally took physical form in 1961. In those intervening fifteen years, thousands of Germans had daily crossed the border between East and West



Berlin—a divided city located well within Communist East Germany—and at least two-and-a-half-million East Germans had fled permanently to the West. From the East German and Soviet perspective, the drain of skilled workers threatened the state. On the night of August 12–13, 1961, the East German army erected a barbed-wire barrier, soon fortified by concrete, watchtowers, and mines. The wall eventually ran twenty-eight miles across Berlin and a further seventy-five miles encircling West Berlin, thus preventing East Germans from using West Berlin as a portal for escape—except to those with the daring captured in this film.

Like the best USIA films, *The Wall* distills political events into an emotionally clear and compelling ideological story. In 1962 Walter de Hoog gathered footage from U.S. and German

Production Company

Director / Writer

Narrator

Editors

Transfer Note

Running Time

newsreel sources and crafted this short film at the production facilities of Hearst Metrotone News, where he had worked since 1950. His straightforward, keenly balanced narration portrays Berliners as “accepting the wall but never resigned to it,” as he put it recently. The extraordinary footage of the first escapes was propaganda enough. His challenge was to make the politics human.

The Wall was produced during the Kennedy administration, when the USIA was directed by legendary broadcaster Edward R. Murrow and its Motion Picture Service headed by twenty-eight-year-old George Stevens, Jr. The early 1960s are the great era for USIA films, which then displayed a wider range of political philosophies than after Vietnam became central to American foreign policy later that decade. Among Walter de Hoog’s other government-sponsored films are *In the Niger* (1968, about the Peace Corps), *The Infinite Journey* (1970, about the first Apollo moon landing), *If One Today, Two Tomorrow* (1976, about overpopulation), and *The Five Cities of June* (1963, co-directed with Bruce Herschensohn), which President John F. Kennedy praised in a letter to Murrow as “the best documentary I ever saw.” Kennedy was no doubt influenced by the film’s help in turning his June 1963 “Ich bin ein Berliner” speech into a key ideological event in the history of walled Berlin. *The Wall* remained a favorite documentary of the president’s brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who went so far as to show it surreptitiously to visiting Soviet artists—who didn’t always take well to the favor.

“We refuse to think that it will always be this way,” narrator Alexander Scourby speaks for Berliners in the film. Twenty-seven years later, on November 9, 1989, the wall became history.—SS

GEORGE DUMPSON'S PLACE (1965)

Filmmaker

Musicians

Sound Assistant

Transfer Note

Running Time

Ed Emshwiller

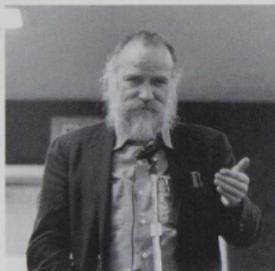
Stuart Scharf, Jay Berliner, and Bill Lee

Bill Griffith

Copied from a 16mm color print preserved by
Anthology Film Archives.

8 minutes

Protean artist Ed Emshwiller (1925–90) combined careers as a painter, illustrator, filmmaker, and teacher. After World War II, he studied at the *École des beaux arts* in Paris on a veteran’s grant. While producing abstract expressionist canvases, he also came to dominate science fiction illustration throughout the 1950s, producing more than five hundred book and magazine covers. In describing what drew him to filmmaking, he said, “Movies are, by nature, a perfect medium for mating various arts.” Emshwiller’s first released film, *Dance Chromatic* (1959), superimposed the gestures of action painting on



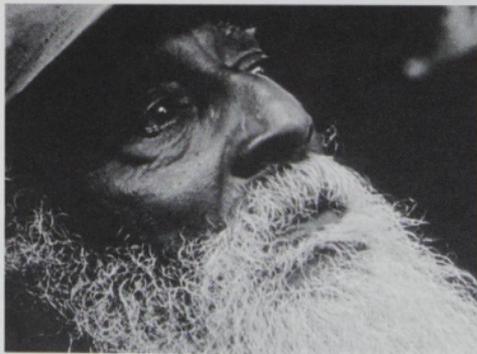
Ed Emshwiller

the movements of dancers. By the early 1970s, he was experimenting in video, creating computer-generated variations on his artworks.

George Dumpson's Place (1965) is one of several short films in which Emshwiller explored the worlds of other artists with whom he felt strong sympathy. George Dumpson was an impoverished African American handyman who squatted on land on Long Island. Emshwiller saw him as a folk artist, a scavenger and assembler of found objects in the tradition of Joseph Cornell (see *Rose Hobart*, in Program Four): “I felt he was an artist because my definition of an artist is a person reorganizing the world, creating a world in his internal likeness.”

In the film Dumpson's overgrown "place" on Long Island is a densely textured mystery of broken dolls, ruined sculpture, and tangled housewares, a world of uncertain boundaries between rural and urban landscapes, interior and exterior spaces, investigated through the sinuous tracking shots for which Emshwiller was noted. At the heart of his maze is Dumpson, glimpsed at the end of a walkway, followed by the startling close-up flash of his face, all white beard and black skin. Sadly, George Dumpson did not live to see the finished film.

If Emshwiller's films are difficult, it's because of their deceptive simplicity. "The perimeters of our understanding are generally defined by our language," he commented in the year of this film; "I do feel that with exposure people can come to understand and appreciate forms of film other than the word-oriented, visually embellished film. And I feel that films that have more of an architectural or musical, mathematical or emotional tone, which don't try to spell something out, can be very effective and very powerful."—SS



About the Preservation

In addition to his other careers, Ed Emshwiller was a tireless advocate for a geographically diverse national community of film and media centers—of the sort that this anthology also celebrates—especially through his work in the 1970s for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Association of Independent Video and Film-Makers. Anthology Film Archives has mounted a project to identify, restore, and make available all of Emshwiller's films. Although the preprint material for *George Dumpson's Place* has been lost, Anthology preserved the film from surviving prints in 1999 through *Treasures of American Film Archives* funding.